

# News

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## **NEW ENGLAND UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS TO 2.8-PERCENT LOW IN 2000**

The unemployment rate in New England averaged 2.8 percent in 2000, a series low, and was down 0.5 percentage point over the year, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Regional Commissioner Denis McSweeney noted that the national jobless rate was 4.0 percent, a 0.2 percentage point decrease from 1999, and that unemployment rates for both the nation and New England had declined for the eighth consecutive year. The previous record low in New England was 3.1 percent set in 1988 (the series began in 1976), while the U.S. rate was at its lowest level since 1969 when it was 3.5 percent.

Among the six New England states, Connecticut's rate, at 2.3 percent, was the lowest and ranked second lowest among all 50 states (behind only Virginia). Massachusetts followed with a rate of 2.6 percent and ranked fourth nationwide. New Hampshire and Vermont recorded rates of 2.8 and 2.9 percent, respectively. In the two remaining states, Maine's jobless rate, at 3.5 percent, was second highest in the division but still below the national average, while Rhode Island's rate, at 4.1 percent, was little different from that for the nation. Overall, half of the eight states nationwide with unemployment rates below 3.0 percent in 2000 were in New England.

Connecticut's unemployment rate was down 0.9 percentage point over the year, the largest decline in New England and fourth largest among the 50 states. Both Maine and Massachusetts had rate decreases of 0.6 percentage point, the eighth largest decline nationwide. As a result, these three states set record low unemployment rates in 2000. (The Massachusetts and Connecticut series begin in 1970, while the Maine series dates from 1976.) The unemployment rates in the three remaining New England states showed little, if any, change from 1999.

The last year in which New England's unemployment rate exceeded the national average was 1992 when it stood at 8.1 percent, compared with 7.5 percent for the nation. Over this eight-year period, New England's rate declined by 5.3 percentage points as the number of unemployed persons fell by 370,000 and those employed rose by 507,000. Annual unemployment was under 200,000 for the first time on record in 2000 and employment was at an all-time high, approaching seven million. All six states in New England enjoyed an improving economy for most of the 1990s, as unemployment rates trended downward with little interruption, resulting in some of the

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lowest state rates in the country. Massachusetts and Connecticut had the largest jobless rate declines between 1992 and 2000, down 6.0 and 5.3 percentage points, respectively. Nationally, the unemployment rate declined steadily during this period, but not as sharply as in New England, moving down 3.5 percentage points.

With three states in New England setting record low unemployment rates and five of the six averaging rates below that for the nation, New England's 2.8 percent rate was the lowest among the nation's nine census divisions in 2000. The West North Central, at 3.2 percent, had had the lowest divisional rate in the country for the prior ten years. However, while New England's rate dropped 0.5 percentage point over the year--the largest decline (along with the Middle Atlantic's) among the divisions--the rate for the West North Central changed little. Among the other divisions, the Pacific's unemployment rate edged down 0.2 percentage point but remained the highest in the country at 5.0 percent. Three other divisions recorded rates above 4.0 percent--the East South Central, West South Central, and Middle Atlantic.

## **Technical Note**

All estimates presented in this release were derived from the Current Population Survey, a sample of about 50,000 households conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. Since these estimates are based on a sample survey, they are subject to sampling and other types of error. Measures of sampling error, in the form of standard errors for state annual average estimates derived from the CPS, are available in the Annual Bulletin, *Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment*.

The sums of individual items may not always equal the totals shown in the same tables because of rounding. For example, unemployment rates are computed, in most instances, from unrounded data rather than from data that may be displayed in the tables; differences, however, are generally insignificant.

More complete information on the technical procedures used to develop these estimates, as well as additional data for regions, divisions and states, appear in *Employment and Earnings*, a BLS monthly periodical. Data by region and division begin in 1976; however, state data series vary in length, starting in 1970 for some states but 1976 for the majority.

**Table 1. Labor force status for the U.S., New England region, and New England states**

Area	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Error range of rate, 2000 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Connecticut</b>												
Employed	1,739,000	1,716,000	1,681,000	1,673,000	1,641,000	1,617,000	1,620,000	1,635,000	1,649,000	1,654,000	1,707,000	
Unemployed	95,000	125,000	139,000	112,000	97,000	94,000	99,000	88,000	57,000	54,000	39,000	
Unemployment rate	5.2	6.8	7.6	6.3	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.1	3.4	3.2	2.3	1.8-2.8
<b>Maine</b>												
Employed	602,000	593,000	604,000	582,000	569,000	603,000	632,000	626,000	621,000	642,000	665,000	
Unemployed	33,000	49,000	47,000	50,000	45,000	37,000	34,000	36,000	29,000	27,000	24,000	
Unemployment rate	5.2	7.6	7.2	7.9	7.4	5.7	5.1	5.4	4.4	4.1	3.5	3.0-4.0
<b>Massachusetts</b>												
Employed	3,033,000	2,876,000	2,876,000	2,945,000	2,982,000	2,994,000	3,035,000	3,131,000	3,166,000	3,179,000	3,151,000	
Unemployed	195,000	286,000	269,000	219,000	191,000	170,000	137,000	131,000	109,000	105,000	86,000	
Unemployment rate	6.0	9.1	8.6	6.9	6.0	5.4	4.3	4.0	3.3	3.2	2.6	2.3-2.9
<b>New Hampshire</b>												
Employed	592,000	576,000	565,000	575,000	595,000	608,000	597,000	625,000	634,000	650,000	666,000	
Unemployed	36,000	45,000	46,000	41,000	29,000	25,000	26,000	20,000	19,000	18,000	19,000	
Unemployment rate	5.7	7.2	7.5	6.6	4.6	4.0	4.2	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.3-3.3
<b>Rhode Island</b>												
Employed	484,000	468,000	474,000	472,000	465,000	454,000	468,000	476,000	474,000	484,000	484,000	
Unemployed	35,000	44,000	47,000	40,000	35,000	34,000	25,000	27,000	24,000	21,000	21,000	
Unemployment rate	6.8	8.6	9.0	7.8	7.1	7.0	5.1	5.3	4.9	4.1	4.1	3.5-4.7
<b>Vermont</b>												
Employed	289,000	284,000	290,000	299,000	300,000	305,000	309,000	314,000	319,000	326,000	322,000	
Unemployed	15,000	19,000	21,000	17,000	15,000	14,000	15,000	13,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	
Unemployment rate	5.0	6.4	6.7	5.5	4.7	4.2	4.6	4.0	3.4	3.0	2.9	2.4-3.4
<b>New England</b>												
Employed	6,738,000	6,514,000	6,489,000	6,546,000	6,552,000	6,581,000	6,661,000	6,807,000	6,864,000	6,935,000	6,995,000	
Unemployed	409,000	569,000	568,000	479,000	412,000	374,000	335,000	315,000	250,000	236,000	199,000	
Unemployment rate	5.7	8.0	8.1	6.8	5.9	5.4	4.8	4.4	3.5	3.3	2.8	2.6-3.0
<b>United States<sup>2</sup></b>												
Employed	118,793,000	117,718,000	118,492,000	120,259,000	123,060,000	124,900,000	126,708,000	129,558,000	131,463,000	131,488,000	135,208,000	
Unemployed	7,047,000	8,628,000	9,613,000	8,940,000	7,996,000	7,404,000	7,236,000	6,739,000	6,210,000	5,880,000	5,655,000	
Unemployment rate	5.6	6.8	7.5	6.9	6.1	5.6	5.4	4.9	4.5	4.2	4.0	3.9-4.1

<sup>1</sup> Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the separate processing and weighting procedures, totals for the United States differ from the results obtained by aggregating data for regions, divisions, or states.

Note: Region and division data are derived from summing the component states. Sub-national data incorporate updated 1990 census-based population controls. Historical data have been revised.

**Table 2. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and over by region and division, 1999-2000 annual averages**  
(Numbers in thousands)

Census region and division	Civilian labor force		Employed		Unemployed		Unemployment rate		Error range of rate, 2000 <sup>1</sup>
	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	
<b>Northeast</b>	26,234	26,295	25,083	25,281	1,151	1,014	4.4	3.9	3.8 - 4.0
New England	7,171	7,194	6,935	6,995	236	199	3.3	2.8	2.6 - 3.0
Middle Atlantic	19,063	19,101	18,148	18,286	915	815	4.8	4.3	4.1 - 4.5
<b>South</b>	48,406	49,035	46,412	47,104	1,994	1,931	4.1	3.9	3.8 - 4.0
South Atlantic	25,060	25,534	24,123	24,627	937	910	3.7	3.6	3.4 - 3.8
East South Central	8,190	8,261	7,823	7,895	368	366	4.5	4.4	4.1 - 4.7
West South Central	15,155	15,240	14,466	14,585	688	655	4.5	4.3	4.1 - 4.5
<b>Midwest</b>	33,442	33,729	32,244	32,493	1,198	1,236	3.6	3.7	3.6 - 3.8
East North Central	23,242	23,422	22,348	22,517	894	905	3.8	3.9	3.7 - 4.1
West North Central	10,200	10,307	9,896	9,976	303	331	3.0	3.2	3.0 - 3.4
<b>West</b>	31,191	31,806	29,658	30,333	1,533	1,473	4.9	4.6	4.4 - 4.8
Mountain	8,847	8,949	8,478	8,614	369	336	4.2	3.8	3.6 - 4.0
Pacific	22,344	22,856	21,180	21,719	1,164	1,137	5.2	5.0	4.8 - 5.2

<sup>1</sup> Error ranges are shown at the 90-percent confidence level.

Note: Regional and division data are derived from summing the component states. Sub-national data incorporate updated 1990 census-based population controls. Historical data have been revised.

Regions are defined as the four Census regions, comprised as follows:

**Northeast Region** includes the New England Division - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont and the Middle Atlantic Division - New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania.

**South Region** includes the South Atlantic Division - Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia; East South Central Division - Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee; and West South Central Division - Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

**Midwest Region** includes the East North Central Division - Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin and the West North Central Division - Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

**West Region** includes the Mountain Division - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming and the Pacific Division - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington.